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Michigan Youth Correctional Facility saved from budget ax

LANSING – Funding for the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin was maintained for this year in the budget approved by the Senate Appropriations Corrections Subcommittee Thursday, announced Sens. Michelle McManus and Alan Cropsey.

“Cutting this facility was never an option to me. Now 228 Lake County families will not suffer the loss of their breadwinner and the county will not have to face an unemployment rate of nearly 23.5 percent,” said McManus, R-Lake Leelanau. “While this is a tremendous victory for Lake County, the fight is not over.”

Closing the facility would not only have directly impacted the unemployment situation in Lake County but would have had a ripple effect in surrounding counties. Early reports stating the closing of the facility would have saved the state \$18 million have been refuted. Independent, non-partisan analysis by the Michigan House Fiscal Agency showed an estimated savings of only \$7.5 million. By comparison, Lake County and its residents stood to lose more than \$10 million a year in tax revenue and wages if the facility had closed.

“Senator McManus, the Lake County elected officials, and the administration of the MYCF has done a very effective job in convincing me that closing the MYCF is not in the best interest of the state, and certainly not in the best interest of the citizens of Lake County,” said Cropsey, R-DeWitt. “Senator McManus and I look forward to working with Lake County and the administration of the MYCF to make the prison more efficient and useful.”

The state contracts with the private facility north of Baldwin in Lake County to house, educate and rehabilitate violent male offenders 19 years old and younger who have been sentenced as adults. Along with being a major job provider in the region, The Geo Group Inc. was the largest source of tax revenue to Lake County in 2004 at almost \$1 million.

The budget now goes before the full Senate Appropriations Committee for consideration.

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